

Is the Rapture Imminent?

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Do we really have reason to believe that the coming of the Lord Jesus is near? Yes, more reasons than any generation in the history of the church has ever had. Let me list a few.

The nation of Israel says that His coming is near (Mt. 24:32-33; Ezek. 36:24-25). What we saw in 1948 was not the final regathering of Israel. It was a remnant of Israel returning in unbelief (Ezek. 36:24-25). The prophesied return will take place when the King comes to reign. But it was and is an unprecedented straw in the wind.

Jerusalem says that the Lord is coming. Jesus said that this city would be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Lk. 21:24). Israel now controls all of the City except a small parcel of land known as die Temple Mount. Militarily it would not be difficult for Israel to seize it.

Speaking through Zechariah, God said. "I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples...a very heavy stone for all peoples: all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it" (Zech. 12:2-3). He did not say this about London or Moscow or Beijing. Only about Jerusalem. And what city is such a cup of trembling for the nations today? Revered by Jews, Muslims, and Christians, it is the despair of international diplomats. They cannot agree to recognize it as the capital of Israel. And it is the scene of terrorism and continued unrest.

The rise of nationalism says so (Lk. 21:29). Jesus said, "Look at the fig tree (Israel) and all the trees (other nations)." When they bud, we know that the kingdom of God (the Millennium) is near. If the kingdom is near, the Rapture is at least seven years nearer. In the 1940's there were 58 members of die United Nations. By July 1993, there were 184. The nations are budding.

Preparations for the rebuilding of the Temple say so. Vessels for the Temple and clothing for the priests are now being prepared in anticipation of the time that the Temple will be rebuilt. No previous generation has seen anything like this.

The European Economic Community, founded on the Treaty of Rome, says so (Dan. 2:40-44; 7:7-8. 23-25; Rev 13:1-10; 17:8-14). This is foreshadowing of the revived Roman Empire. I have a coin of the EEC (called an ECU) on which the logo is a woman riding a two-horned beast over waters. This is remarkably similar to what we read in Revelation 17:3. 15-16. It is the difference between two horns and seven. Of all the logos that could have been chosen, why did they choose this one?

I also have a poster of the Council of Europe, unmistakably showing the tower of Babel being rebuilt. The caption says: Europe: Many Tongues. One Voice.

Helmut Kohl, Germany's Chancellor. said. "The United States of Europe will form the core of a peaceful order . . . the age prophesied of old, when all shall dwell secure and none shall make them afraid." Grand words, Mr. Kohl. but unfortunately not true.

The apostasy of Christendom says that the Lord's coming is near (Lk. 18:7-8; 2 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-13). Never before has there been such a turning away from the

Christian faith. Prominent theologians try to outdo one another with blasphemous and heretical pronouncements concerning the basic truths of Christianity. The honor of Christ means nothing to them.

The ecumenical movement says so (Rev. 17 and 18). We have been shocked to see prominent evangelical leaders praising the Pope, sending converts back to the Catholic church and the Jewish synagogue, and urging greater cooperation with the Catholic Church. A prominent evangelist said, "I have no quarrel with the Catholic Church . . . we'll send [inquirers] to their own churches, Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish." Another said, "Preach the gospel, but don't be so negative as to refuse to endorse or work with those who belong to a group that proclaims a different gospel." A respected writer and frequent speaker at InterVarsity conferences said, "The visible union of all professing Christians should be our goal . . . and evangelicals should join others . . . in working toward full communion with the Roman Catholic Church."

The rise of false messiahs says so (Mt. 24:5. 23-24. 26). David Karesh said, "If the Bible is true, then I am Christ." Prior to his death, the 92-year-old Rabbi Schneerson was hailed as the Messiah. Reverend Moon claims to be the new world Messiah. Speaking of the need for a strong man to rule, Paul Henri-Spaak, one of the organizers of the European Common Market, said. "Send us such a man, and be he God or devil, we will follow him."

Famine conditions say so (Mt. 24:7). The World Food Bank estimates that by the end of this decade one-half billion people will starve to death. That is one-fourth of the world's population. The famines predicted in Matthew 24 precede Christ's coming to reign. If that is so, how much closer is the Rapture!

Plagues and pestilences say so (Mt. 24:7). Thanks to jet travel plagues can spread faster than ever before in history. John Cionci, medical doctor and correspondent, says. "We think it likely that AIDS is the worst plague in human history." I have read that one-fourth of the population of Africa will die of this disease.

The Euphrates River says so. The Turks are building the Ataturk Dam. It can hold nearly 50 billion cubic meters of water. For several weeks in January 1990, the Turks interrupted the flow of the Euphrates on its ancient course down into Mesopotamia. To fill it completely, they would have to stop the Euphrates for nearly two years. Read Revelation 16:12 at this point.

Modern technology says so (Rev. 13:16-18). All the technology is already in place for the Antichrist to enforce his law concerning the number 666. Every time you use your VISA card, be reminded that the Lord's coming is near. Credit cards with chips, scanners, the Internet, all tell the same story. Beginning with the social security number, this intrusion on our privacy has all been introduced gradually, but now Big Brother knows all about us. An ACLU spokesman said, "If Congress tried to introduce a central file on every Person, it would go down to defeat . . . but what couldn't be done frontally has happened incrementally."

Toshiba has developed a chip that has memory equal to 10,000 times an average person's personal computer's capacity. It could contain your personal history, your credit rating, your religious affiliation, your family—everything about you.

The increase of the Anti-Christian spirit says it (1 Jn. 2:18). At one time it was considered respectable to be a Christian. Now the word brings forth a stream of vitriol. Believers are sneered at as fundamentalists, right wingers, etc. It is estimated that 160,000 Christians have

been martyred during this last year. And there have been more Christians who have died for their faith during the 20th century than in all previous centuries combined.

Add to the above the increase of earthquakes (Mt. 24:7; Lk. 21:11), wars and rumors of wars (Mt. 24:6), increase of spiritism (1 Tim. 4:1-5): and the general confidence that there will be peace and security (1 Thess. 5:3).

I was encouraged lately to read that more Jews have been saved in the last 19 years than in the last 1900 years. It made me wonder if God is calling out a remnant for His name, predecessors of the 144,000 who will be His witnesses during the Tribulation period.

Many of the signs we have listed are conditions that will prevail before the Lord Jesus comes back to the earth to set up His kingdom on earth. His coming to rapture the Church takes place at least seven years before then. If we already see foreshadows of the events, we have every reason to look up and believe that our redemption draws near. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!